

Location: More than 1,300 Lhomi inhabit the border area between southern Tibet and Nepal. Despite their relatively small population, the Lhomi are found in three countries. The majority (4,000) live in six villages in the eastern hills of the Sankhwawasa District in the Koshi Zone of eastern Nepal. They live near the Arun River and are bilingual in the Nepali language. An additional 1,000 Lhomi speakers live in the famous tea-growing and tourist region of Darjeeling in India. The Lhomi live at the juncture of the former nations of Sikkim and Tibet, and the current nations of India and Nepal.

Identity: Although they are considered part of the Tibetan nationality, the Lhomi possess their own distinct language and culture. *Lhomi* means "southern people."¹

Language: The Lhomi language was studied extensively in the 1970s by linguists Oliva and Marja Vesalinen.² Lhomi, which is a part of the Central Bodic branch of Tibeto-Burman, is reported to have 65% lexical similarity with Central Tibetan and Kyerung and 58% with Sherpa.³ The dialect spoken by the Lhomi in Tibet may differ from those spoken in Nepal and India.

History: The Lhomi are a Tibetan people who have been influenced by non-Tibetans over the course of many centuries. This has led to the mixture of cultural, linguistic, and religious traits that today identify them as a distinct people group.

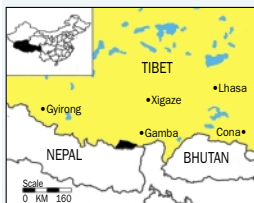
Customs: Over the past 20 years, some Lhomi in Nepal have moved and settled down in the nation's capital, Katmandu, where they work as laborers and builders. Most of the Lhomi men who work in Katmandu send money back to their families. They are only able to travel back to their home villages once or twice a year. "This independent tribe grows a few crops, in particular millet for making gruel and beer. They raise sheep for wool and meat, and weave cotton-like garments from wild sisal hemp."⁴

Religion: The Lhomi believe in the existence of spirits and natural forces that control the affairs of their lives. Their religion has been described as "unrefined Buddhism.... Their shamans (animistic priests) are as active as the Buddhist lamas. Although animal sacrifice is abhorrent to orthodox Buddhists, the Lhomis make several ritual animal sacrifices during the year."⁵ Before millet is planted in September, the Lhomi kill three sheep to placate the patron deity of their village.



Paul Hattaway

Christianity: Due to the large foreign missionary contingent formerly based in Darjeeling, northeast India, many Lhomi there have some awareness of the gospel, and a few have believed in Christ. In recent years more than 100 Lhomi in Nepal have also put their faith in Christ. They are now sending evangelists to other people groups. Lhomi Scripture portions were first printed in 1976, and gospel recordings are also available. Further linguistic work is reportedly in progress to translate more of the Bible into Lhomi. Despite the existence of Lhomi Christians in Nepal and India, it has proven difficult for the gospel to spread to their counterparts in Tibet, due to the political situation there and the tightly controlled borders.



Population in China:

- 1,000 (1985)
- 1,350 (2000)
- 1,660 (2010)

Location: Tibet

Religion: Animism

Christians: None Known

Overview of the Lhomi

Countries: Nepal, China, India

Pronunciation: "Low-mee"

Other Names: Lhoket, Shing Saapa, Kathe Bhote, Kar Bhote, Shingsawa

Population Source: 1,000 (1992 B. Grimes - 1985 figure); Out of a total Tibetan population of 4,593,330 (1990 census); 4,000 in Nepal; 1,000 in India (1985)

Location: *S Tibet:* Along the Nepal border, east of Mt. Everest

Status:

Officially included under Tibetan

Language: Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Bodic, Bodish, Tibetan, Central Tibetan

Dialects: 0

Religion: Animism, Tibetan Buddhism, Shamanism

Christians: None known

Scripture: Portions 1976; Work in progress

Jesus film: None

Gospel Recordings:

Lhomi #04092

Christian Broadcasting: None

ROPAL code: LHM00

